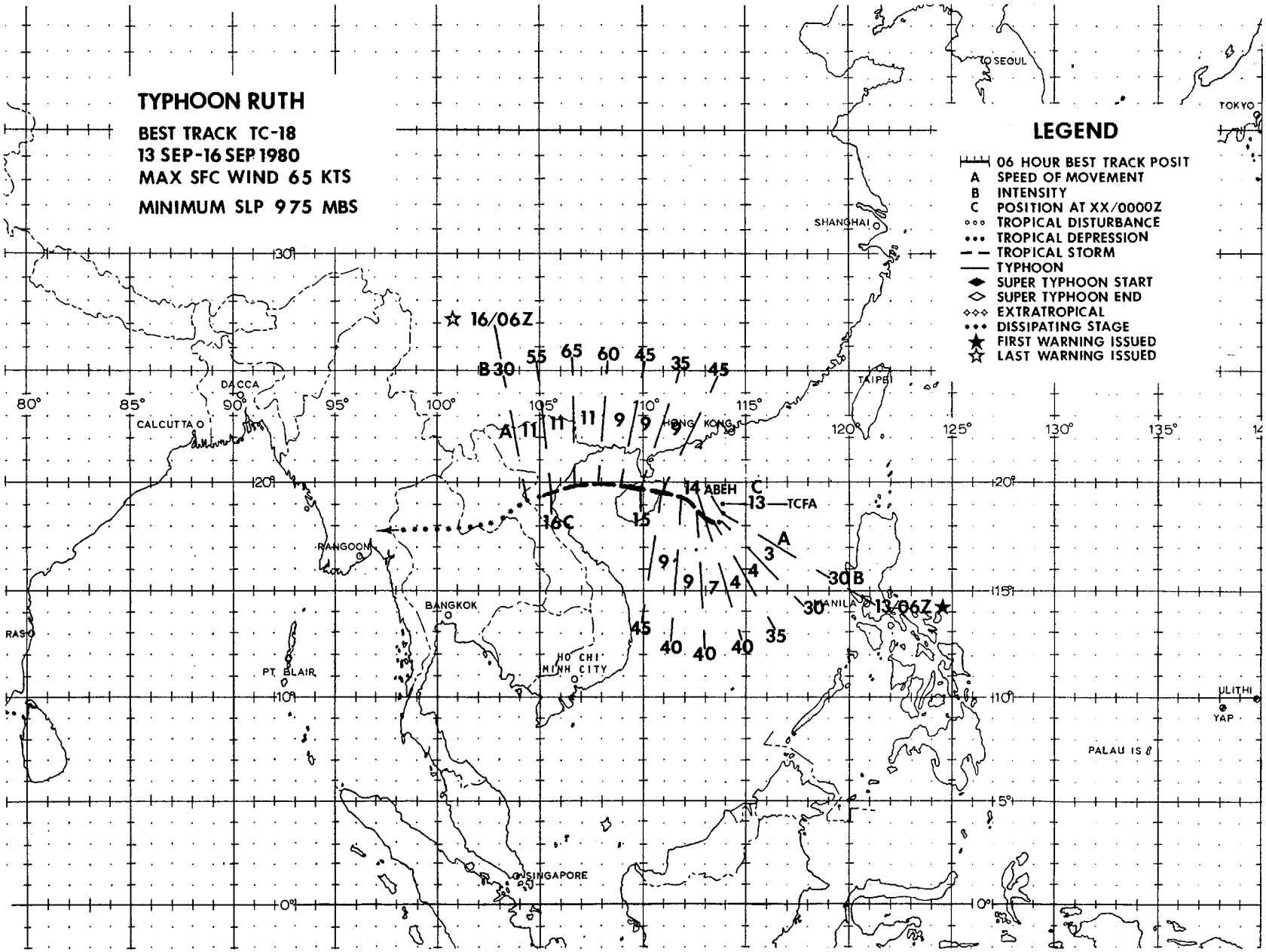
TYPHOON RUTH
BEST TRACK TC-18
13 SEP-16 SEP 1980
MAX SFC WIND 65 KTS
MINIMUM SLP 975 MBS
LEGEND
06 HOUR BEST TRACK POSIT
A SPEED OF MOVEMENT
B INTENSITY
C POSITION AT XX/0000Z
TROPICAL DISTURBANCE
TROPICAL DEPRESSION
TROPICAL STORM
TYPHOON
SUPER TYPHOON START
SUPER TYPHOON END
EXTRATROPICAL
DISSIPATING STAGE
FIRST WARNING ISSUED
LAST WARNING ISSUED
16/06Z
13/06Z
ABEH
TCFA
SEOUL
TOKYO
SHANGHAI
TAIPEI
HONG KONG
DACCA
CALCUTTA
RANGOON
BANGKOK
MANILA
PT BLAIR
HO CHI MINH CITY
SINGAPORE
YAP
ULITHI
PALAU IS
80°
85°
90°
95°
100°
105°
110°
115°
120°
125°
130°
135°
30°
20°
15°
10°
5°
0°

Typhoon Ruth was the second of five typhoons occurring in September. Unlike the other typhoons, Ruth began as a monsoon depression in the South China Sea on 11 September. For two days, the depression remained quasi-stationary with the weak surface circulation embedded in the monsoonal trough. Synoptic data on the 13th, however, indicated that the circulation was intensifying; also, satellite imagery showed that it was forming its own outflow center. As a result, JTWC issued a formation alert at 130047Z. Later satellite data showed that further development had occurred which prompted the first warning to be issued on TD 18 at 130600Z.

During the early phase of development, TD 18 tracked slowly southward, steered by the near surface wind flow. By 131800Z, TD 18 had intensified to Tropical Storm Ruth and had started to track northwestward at an accelerated forward speed of movement. For the rest of her existence, Ruth tracked along the southern periphery of the 500 mb ridge which was centered over southern Mainland China. She reached her first maximum intensity of 45 kt (23 m/sec) prior to landfall over Hai-Nan Tao, but quickly weakened to minimal tropical storm strength while over the island. Ruth entered the Gulf of Tonkin on the 15th and, during her transit, rapidly intensified to typhoon strength with a maximum surface wind of 65 kt (33 m/sec) and a minimum sea-level pressure of 975 mb.

Brand (1970) summarized the finding of Perlroth (1969) who showed that vertical temperature differences between the ocean surface and the 200 ft (61 m) water depth have an important effect on development of tropical cyclones. Perlroth reported that approximately 90% of the tropical cyclones that reached hurricane intensity in the equatorial Atlantic from 1901-1965 occurred where the climatological difference between the ocean surface temperature and the 200 ft (61 m) temperature was 3.9C degrees or less. Climatology for September shows that the Gulf of Tonkin has warm sea surface temperatures (29C) and a vertical temperature gradient along Ruth's track which is within the constraints reported by Perlroth for intensification to typhoon strength. Thus, the northern portion of the Gulf of Tonkin can serve as a sufficient heat source for tropical cyclones, such as Ruth, to intensify when conditions are favorable. This apparently is true despite the fact that the Gulf is surrounded on three sides by land.

Ruth made landfall at 160000Z south of Thanh Hou, Vietnam. Nearly half a million people were left homeless with 106 persons known dead or missing in Vietnam. Ruth also caused massive crop damages and interrupted communications in the area.

After landfall, Ruth again weakened and dissipated as a significant tropical cyclone. The remnants of Ruth tracked west-southwestward for the next two days and dissipated over the Bilauk-taung Range along the border of Burma and Thailand.